

# St Mary's Catholic School, Penzance

Peverell Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2AT

## Inspection dates

2–3 October 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders are ambitious and rigorous in their actions. They have successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The quality of education has improved rapidly and is now good.
- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. Her high expectations and vision permeate the school. As a result, pupils achieve well, and morale is high.
- Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use their evaluations well to set the right priorities for improvement.
- Middle and senior leaders are effective in holding other teachers to account. The development of all leaders has been instrumental in securing the necessary improvements.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Consequently, pupils typically make good progress, including disadvantaged pupils. Only some minor inconsistencies remain. Very occasionally agreed actions for targeted pupils are not implemented. This slows the progress of a few identified pupils.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Leaders implement a high-quality curriculum. A broad range of experiences adds depth and meaning to the school day. Consequently, pupils are motivated and enjoy their learning.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They willingly act as ambassadors and contribute well to the day-to-day running of the school.
- The quality of early years provision is good. Staff help children to settle quickly and make strong progress across the curriculum. Therefore, children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Leaders gather a wide range of useful information about pupils and know individuals well. Leaders' plans and actions occasionally lack precision to secure even better progress for identified pupils.
- Despite ongoing improvement, relative weaknesses in the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar slow the progress of some prior low- and middle-attaining pupils.
- Absence rates remain too high, particularly for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
- Parents are overwhelming positive about the school. They recognise the dramatic improvements that have been made.

## **Full report**

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that plans and actions are even more precise for targeted pupils to make the rapid progress they need to catch up.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - agreed actions for targeted pupils are acted upon swiftly and delivered routinely in day-to-day teaching
  - pupils' use and application of spelling, punctuation and grammar is consistently accurate to help raise achievement in reading and writing, particularly for prior low- and middle-attaining pupils.
- Improve pupils' attendance, especially for those who have high rates of persistent absence and EAL pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. Her unwavering efforts, high expectations and a strong vision is ensuring that every pupil can achieve well. As a result, standards are improving strongly, morale among staff and pupils is high and parents have full confidence in the school's work.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked relentlessly to fully address the identified weaknesses. Leaders are now ambitious for pupils. They hold teachers stringently to account to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have taken prompt and decisive action to intervene when teaching has not been good enough. At the same time, leaders have invested wisely in appropriate training and support for teachers. This has led to an established group of teachers who have the professional confidence, knowledge and expertise to meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They gather and evaluate a range of information well to quickly set the right priorities and resolve emerging issues.
- Senior leaders and governors have invested shrewdly to improve the effectiveness and contribution of others, including the assistant headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator) and subject leaders. Professional development for middle leaders, including through nationally accredited courses, is paying dividends. Leaders are involved in monitoring teaching and hold teachers directly to account. This is increasing capacity and continuing to improve the quality of education in the school.
- However, a small minority of provision maps and subject leader action plans are not yet precise enough. They lack clear success criteria and timescales. One example of this is the 'pupil premium provision maps'. As a result, a few of the most vulnerable pupils are not targeted well enough and this prevents them from making the rapid progress needed to catch up with their peers.
- Leaders implement a high-quality curriculum with a broad range of experiences to add depth and meaning to pupils' learning. Leaders base this on a clearly identified rationale for the curriculum design which identifies long-term goals for pupils. This prepares pupils well for the wider world, including enabling them to learn about the importance of fundamental British values.
- Leaders and governors ensure that a comprehensive range of extended activities and extra-curricular clubs adds to the school's core offer. In addition, visits and residential breaks, as well as visitors to the school, deepen pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are provided with a clear moral compass, for example through learning about religious stories and virtues linked to assembly themes. Pupils identify their own key values and principles to foster a strong sense of community.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic about the direction of the school. They are delighted with the communication and interaction with staff, particularly the headteacher. Typical responses to Parent View included, 'This is a fantastic school', and 'The leadership has improved tenfold since the headteacher arrived.'

- The additional pupil premium funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils. The headteacher drives the pupil premium agenda effectively. She closely monitors the progress of every pupil with class teachers. Pupil progress meetings are held routinely with teachers to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' individual needs are identified. Additional provision, such as attendance at sporting events and clubs, is monitored. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are being ably supported to do well, including socially and emotionally.
- Governors have ensured that the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has received continued professional development and training since the previous inspection. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well catered for in this inclusive school. The additional funding for special educational needs is used well. However, a few pupils' individual plans need to be implemented, delivered and evaluated more swiftly to have an even greater impact on their outcomes.

### **Governance of the school**

- The Interim Academy Board (IAB), put in place to fulfil the roles and responsibilities of the local governing body, has been effective in delivering the intentions, aims and objectives of the school improvement plan.
- The IAB has contributed significantly to the school's improvement through focused monitoring and timely, probing questions. For example, it has contributed towards improving the quality of teaching by ensuring that policies and procedures have been utilised to eliminate inadequate teaching.
- IAB members and trustees have been effective in providing the right balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and other senior leaders. Consequently, staff have grown in confidence and the school community has been galvanised.
- The IAB has worked in tandem with school leaders and senior officers of the trust. It has been an effective conduit for improvement and change. Currently, the IAB is finalising its plans for the 'shadow governing body' to resume full control in October 2018.
- The chair of the IAB will step into the role of chair of the new governing body to aid transition and continuity. Ongoing support through the trust, including visits from the Education and Standards Manager (ESM) is planned to continue, along with a raft of further training and ongoing support for new governors.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are diligent and vigilant in protecting pupils to keep them safe. Staff are acutely aware of the school's procedures and leaders' expectations for looking after pupils. As a result, there is a prevalent culture for safeguarding at this school.
- Systems and processes are fully in place, including relevant risk assessments, so that pupils are protected from harm and hazards. For example, the swimming pool is checked daily and a lifeguard is always present during swimming lessons.

- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the school meets requirements for recruiting and appointing staff. Training for staff, governors and volunteers is fully in place so that adults know how to escalate or refer concerns quickly to the designated safeguarding leaders. Leaders are tenacious in how they manage referrals, including working alongside and, as appropriate, challenging external agencies.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and valued. They show a keen understanding of how to stay safe in different situations. For example, they know they should protect their passwords when working online. Visitors to the school help raise pupil awareness of local risks. For example, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution deliver sessions about coastal safety.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the time of the previous inspection. Leaders' determined actions continue to improve teaching and are successful in ensuring more pupils are thriving at St. Mary's.
- Teachers know the pupils well and plan work that is well matched to pupils' different needs and abilities. As a result, historical weaknesses in performance have been eradicated and the vast majority of pupils are making strong progress across a variety of subjects.
- Teachers check pupils' work and intervene at timely intervals to provide appropriate prompts and guidance. They successfully adjust and adapt lessons to meet pupils' needs. This helps pupils to be successful learners and overcome barriers.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. This is seen in the quality of pupils' work and in pupils' learning behaviours. The challenges routinely set for the most able pupils ensures that their learning is extended effectively.
- Teachers plan work carefully to build appropriately on what pupils already know, can do and understand. This enables pupils to deepen their knowledge and practise relevant skills to master key concepts, for example interpreting and using negative numbers to solve mathematical problems.
- Teachers present activities so that pupils can work well together to solve a range of problems. As a consequence, pupils acquire the skills required to work effectively as part of a team.
- Teachers ensure that writing tasks give pupils a distinct purpose and reason to write. This captures pupils' imagination and motivates them. For example, pupils enjoyed writing Beowulf newsletters and stories about childhood in Victorian Britain. The consistent approach to the teaching of writing from early language development and recalling familiar stories in the Nursery and extending right through to Year 6, is proving effective.
- Some technical aspects of spelling, punctuation and grammar are not yet embedded across the whole school. Therefore, some prior low- and middle-attaining pupils repeat errors in their writing. This slows their progress and reduces the overall quality of their written work. Some minor weaknesses in the teaching of spelling prevent a few older pupils from being able to decode more confidently when reading.

- The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is good and securing the future foundations for pupils' long-term success in reading. Teaching is well organised so that pupils are taught letters and sounds in a coherent and logical sequence. Teachers check pupils' knowledge to make sure that they are consistently receiving the right input to help them learn well.
- Teaching assistants and other adults are valued members of the team. They make positive contributions in lessons and provide effective challenge and support for pupils. Very occasionally their subject knowledge fails to address pupils' misconceptions well enough. This leads to a slight pause in pupils' learning journeys.
- Teaching widely enables pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to do well. As a result, those who have fallen behind are showing strong signs of recovery in reading, writing and mathematics. Occasionally day-to-day teaching for a few of the most vulnerable pupils lacks precision. Therefore, some targeted pupils are not making the more accelerated progress they need to catch up.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show increasing confidence and resilience in their work to accomplish tasks. Staff model positive behaviours in the way they interact with each other and parents. These are reflected in the pupils' own attitudes and dispositions towards each other and their work.
- Pupils are valued and enjoy taking positions of responsibility to help with the daily running of the school, for example through being librarians, lunchtime monitors or worship leaders. They also contribute to strategic aims, for example through monitoring as subject ambassadors. This provides pupils with tangible opportunities to develop key social skills, including teamwork and leadership skills while contributing to curriculum and subject developments.
- Pupils play and interact well together. The school's inclusive ethos and values are represented through the promotion of fundamental British values, such as respecting individual liberty and tolerance. Pupils also understand democracy and respect the rights of individuals, for example through writing manifestos and being elected as a school councillor.
- The academic outcomes for a very small minority of vulnerable pupils place a restriction on their wider development and welfare. Leaders understand this and are taking effective action to ensure that the most vulnerable disadvantaged pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are being monitored closely to raise their achievement.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Staff apply the behaviour management policy effectively. This reinforces positive behaviour so that pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. Parents recognise this and commonly praise school staff for improvements in behaviour since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy learning in an environment conducive to developing academic, as well as social and emotional, well-being. For example, pupils talk positively about using the library and chapel at different times to support them.
- Leaders work with parents and carers, as well as a range of professionals, to monitor pupils' attendance. They are proactive in identifying pupils that they are concerned about and are working with parents and carers to improve pupils' attendance. This is now starting to improve attendance.
- However, attendance remains below the national average, as do comparisons for those who have the highest persistent absence, in particular, EAL pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Achievement is on a trajectory of strong improvement in all key stages. Most notably, historic weaknesses in pupils' progress and the standards they reach in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 are being reversed at pace.
- Published information for key stage 2 in 2018 is not a reliable indicator of the pupils' actual achievement. This is due to 'outliers', such as pupils with an education, health and care plan and other late-joining pupils with EAL skewing headline figures for this cohort. Work in pupils' books shows that they make consistently strong progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education when they leave St Mary's.
- Attainment is improving for the vast majority of pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils. However, there are some remaining differences for leaders to continue diminishing in reading, writing and mathematics. These occur in 'patches' across the school. In addition, a few prior low- and middle-attaining pupils struggle with age-appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar. This prevents them from writing or reading more fluently.
- Detailed work scrutiny shows that pupils in all year groups are making strong progress. This includes those who have SEN and/or disabilities and EAL pupils. However, there are a few remaining individuals or pockets across the school where pupils are not making the same rapid progress as their peers. These individuals and circumstances are known to leaders who are taking positive steps to intervene.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are good. They make strong progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils learn their letters and sounds well in key stage 1 and apply these to their reading and writing. The Year 1 phonics screening results have been consistently above national benchmarks. However, once pupils have met this standard, there is a slight dip in how they then use and apply these skills consistently in reading. A small number of pupils have reading books which are not matched well to their reading ages.
- Leaders' work on resilience is enabling pupils to be independent. This is supporting an increasing proportion of pupils to exceed the expected standards in reading, writing

and mathematics at each key stage. Work in books also confirms that the most able pupils are being stretched and challenged to reach the higher standards.

- Outcomes across the curriculum and in subjects other than English and mathematics are improving. However, this is sometimes hindered, particularly for the older lower-achieving pupils who need to catch up, where spelling, punctuation and grammar remain weaker.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Leaders have successfully resolved the weaknesses in the early years identified at the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is good so that children are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Staff's high expectations and well-established routines help the children to settle quickly into the early years unit. As a result, children are soon immersed into high-quality activities that encourage them to learn and play effectively together.
- Adults consistently reinforce positive behaviour. Children show kindness and respect to each other, for example when waiting for their turn to share ideas and in listening attentively to one another.
- The early years curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of the children, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Adults get to know the children very well. They are already tailoring provision for different children who have only just started in the Nursery. For example, a child entering the Nursery with a knowledge of some numbers to 20 was observed having a one-to-one session with an adult outside to ensure unique pitch and challenge.
- Children leave well prepared for the next stage in their education, with the vast majority attaining a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year. This represents strong progress as upon entry to the Nursery only just over half of the children were assessed as being at the typical stage of development.
- Children make strong progress across all areas of learning. However, despite some improvements in the previous year, there are still too few of the most able children exceeding the early learning goals. This is particularly so in their personal, social and emotional development and writing. Observations confirm that provision and activities for these children remain a key focus for leaders to continue raising achievement in the early years.
- Parents and carers are delighted with the levels of engagement and communication with staff in the early years unit. This is aided by the availability and use of the school's online assessment system. Parents and carers upload information that teachers use to inform their planning. This two-way process enables children to benefit from positive relations between home and school.
- The early years is led effectively. Advice, including through the IAB, to implement key changes to improve the quality of teaching and provision in the early years has been well responded to. Children get off to a good start.



- Safeguarding arrangements, including relevant staffing ratios and paediatric first aid training, are fit for purpose. The early years unit consistently promotes a strong culture of safeguarding.

## School details

Unique reference number	140778
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10053399

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	Trust board
Chair	Pat McGovern
Headteacher	Demelza Bolton
Telephone number	01736 330 005
Website	<a href="http://www.st-marys-catholic.eschools.co.uk">www.st-marys-catholic.eschools.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@st-marys-rc-pz.cornwall.sch.uk">head@st-marys-rc-pz.cornwall.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12–13 October 2016

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. The trust was formed on 1 April 2014.
- Currently the school is being governed by an IAB consisting of three members. The IAB acts with the legal powers delegated through the trust's structure.
- A 'shadow local governing body' is also installed. Local governors have been trained and supported to resume full control of the school on 12 October 2018.
- The school has a Nursery as part of the early years provision. Currently there is no provision for two-year-olds. Most children transfer to the full-time Reception class at the end of their time in Nursery.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. However, the number in this group is increasing, particularly through representation from eastern European countries.
- The school runs a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including a daily breakfast and after-school club.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the third monitoring visit undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectors since the school was placed in special measures in October 2016. It was deemed a full section 5 to remove the special measures designation in accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons in all classes across the school; most were joined by senior leaders. These included the early years and phonics sessions in key stage 1.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, assistant headteacher/SENCo, subject leaders and the early years leader.
- Additional discussions were held with representatives of the trust. These included the chief executive officer, education and standards manager and the IAB. Some members of the shadow governing body were also present during the meeting with the IAB.
- The inspectors gained the views of pupils throughout the inspection, including discussions at breaktimes.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in books with other leaders to establish the current quality of work in books. Due to the timing of the inspection in the new school year, inspectors also looked at work retained from the previous Year 6 cohort.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in key stages 1 and 2. They also sampled pupils' knowledge of phonics in key stage 1.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and parents to seek their views of the school. The 25 surveys from Parent View and corresponding 15 free-text comments were considered by inspectors. In addition, information from staff and pupil surveys was taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including meeting minutes, headteacher reports, governor visits, improvement plans and information relating to behaviour, safety and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard Light

Senior, Her Majesty's Inspector

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